

ARTICLE APPEARED
ON PAGE **87**READER'S DIGEST
NOVEMBER 1983A READER'S DIGEST
EXCLUSIVE

DRUGS FOR GUNS

The Bulgarian Connection**By NATHAN M. ADAMS**

Like a plague, drug addiction has swept through much of the world, destroying lives, sowing crime. For years the prime engine of drug trafficking has been the criminal underworld. But recently a new and far more menacing powerhouse has moved into the international drug world, one motivated not simply by greed but by a determination to destabilize Western society. Its method: trade guns for drugs. Its central operator: Bulgaria.

Today, over 50 percent of the heroin consumed in Europe and much of that in the United States flows across Bulgaria's borders with the full knowledge and direct participation of high-ranking government officials. The drugs come originally from such gun-hungry Middle Eastern nations as Lebanon, Iran and Iraq, from the Palestine Liberation Organization and from various terrorist groups. Paid for with Warsaw-pact weaponry, the drugs are eventually sold to the addicts of New York or Paris or Hamburg. The profits are invested in more arms, to be sold for still more drugs.

Drawing on intelligence data compiled by eight nations in North America, Europe and the Middle East, and interviewing narcotics traffickers, international arms brokers and former Bulgarian operatives, Reader's Digest Senior Editor Nathan Adams has uncovered a story whose full dimensions have never before been revealed. Here is his report:

AT EXACTLY 4 P.M. on the sleety afternoon of February 10, 1971, at a spot where the river Bistritza flowing south in Bulgaria briefly parallels the frontier before plunging into Greece, a stocky, uniformed figure slipped out of the undergrowth. The man was Stefan Sverdlev, a colonel in the Komitet Darzhavna Sigurnost (KDS), the Bulgarian Committee for State Security, a sister organization to the Soviet KGB. Sverdlev was about to become one of the highest-level de-

fectors ever to flee the Soviet bloc. Clutching his five-month-old son in one powerful arm and leading his wife and daughter by the other, he slipped into the frigid, chest-deep current. Within 15 minutes the family had reached a Greek-border outpost. In Sverdlev's possession: some 500 sensitive KDS documents.

News of Sverdlev's defection sent shock waves all the way to KGB headquarters in Moscow. In the months ahead Bulgarian net-

works in Greece began to collapse as Sverdlev talked and analysts pored over the top-secret documents. Ironically, one document—#M-120/00-0050—drew only modest attention. Its subject: the destabilization of Western society through, among other tools, the narcotics trade.

For eight years, Sverdlev worked for Greek intelligence. Then, a victim of Greece's recent courtship of the Warsaw Pact, he was expelled, to resettle, at last, in West Germany. The documents he defected with remain in Athens. I interviewed Sverdlev in Munich, where he lives today in fear. Could he shed light on repeated reports that his former employers in Bulgaria were playing a key role in smuggling heroin to the United States and western Europe?

Yes, he certainly could. Sverdlev then told me about KDS Directive M-120/00-0050, and revealed the series of events that led to the drafting of that document. In 1967, Sverdlev recalled, the heads of the Warsaw Pact security services met in Moscow. Among the subjects discussed was how best to exploit and hasten the inherent "corruption" of Western society. A follow-up meeting among top KDS officials in Sofia, Bulgaria's capital, then mapped strategy, to be implemented over the next three years. The directive—dated July 16, 1970—was the direct result of the new policy.

"We all knew what it meant,"

Continued